

The China Maps of Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville: Origins and Supporting Networks

MARIO CAMS

Abstract: By 1735, Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville had produced forty-one maps of the Qing Empire, or China, a process significantly more complex than scholars have hitherto appreciated. A close study of d'Anville's maps and their originals has revealed their relationship with the different versions of a Chinese atlas, the first of which was completed early in 1718, the outcome of nearly a decade of collaborative surveying between officials of the Qing Empire and European missionaries. The precise origins of some of the maps are identified for the first time, and the network behind the remarkable intercontinental exchange of cartographical material that allowed d'Anville to produce his China maps is also discussed, thereby illustrating the central role of the French Jesuits, as well as the connection with St Petersburg.

Keywords: Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville, Jean-Baptiste du Halde, Antoine Gaubil, Pierre Jartoux, Joseph-Nicolas Delisle, China, Tartary, Korea, Tibet, Manchuria, Mongolia, Qing Empire, Kangxi emperor, Jesuit missions, Sino-Western relations, geographical surveys, land surveys, Académie des sciences, *Nouvel atlas de la Chine*, *Huangyu quanlan tu*, Jesuit atlas, Kangxi atlas, Manchu.

In 1735, an expensive four-volume work on China was published in Paris, carrying the grand title *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* and still considered to be one of the most comprehensive accounts on China ever written.¹ The volumes were compiled by the Parisian Jesuit Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1674–1743), who had been given the responsibility of editing and publishing the wealth of information that was reaching the French Jesuits from their China mission. One of the more prominent features of the *Description* is the set of 41 maps of the Chinese provinces, Tartary, Tibet and Korea that it contains.² Most of these maps, du Halde states in the preface, were adaptations of Chinese originals that had been produced at the behest of the emperor of China and with the assistance of European missionaries.³

The adaptations were executed by Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697–1782), a young cartographer who also created four entirely new general maps for du Halde. After their publication in du Halde's *Description*, d'Anville's China maps became a subject of debate, and contributed a great deal to European geographical knowledge of East Asia. They were frequently republished for well over half a century, sometimes in pirated editions, thus achieving wide circulation and remaining the primary authoritative source of geographical information on the region until well into the nineteenth century. {I integrated two sentences because both started with 'they' }

Little has been known about the provenance of d'Anville's China maps, however, and basic questions regarding their origins have never been answered. In what circumstances were the original Chinese maps produced? How did they reach Europe? Why did it take more than fifteen years for the maps to be published there, and to what extent were the published maps based on Chinese originals? From a close study of the maps and of contemporary published and unpublished accounts, both European and Chinese, I have been able to establish the relationship between d'Anville's China maps and different versions of a Chinese atlas.

In exploring the relationship, I start with an examination of the production context of the original Chinese maps and their transmission to Paris, where the publication project was deferred for almost a decade. Next, a detailed analysis of d'Anville's adaptations is provided, in the course of which I identify two original maps for the first time, before discussing the process of composing the general maps, paying special attention to the additional sources that were consulted, as well as to the role of St Petersburg in accessing these sources. Finally, I conclude by elaborating on the reception of these maps in both Europe and China, which polarized into a heated public debate and compelled d'Anville to write several essays refuting some of the criticism on his work.

Underlying my approach, and inherent in the large amount of information that reached Europe as a result of the Jesuits' involvement in the mapping of the Qing Empire during the first half of the eighteenth century, is a reconstruction of the network that supported the unprecedented circulation of cartographical material between Europe and Asia, and vice versa, at the core of which were the French Jesuits. The network was based mainly on Beijing and Paris, but also, to a lesser degree, on St Petersburg. It was this network that ultimately allowed d'Anville to produce his celebrated China maps.